

Message Text

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46

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 NEA-14 IO-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 SAM-01 SSO-00

NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-11

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SAJ-01 NIC-01 DRC-01 /143 W

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O R 051630Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0189

INFO USINT ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL CAPETOWN

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONSUL LOURENCO MARQUES

AMCONSUL LUANDA

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USMISSION NATO
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CINCLANT
USCINCEUR
DIA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT PO
SUBJ: ESTABLISHMENT PRESS EMERGES VICTORIOUS,
EXTREMIST JOURNAL PAYS THE PRICE.

CAPETOWN FOR EMBASSY

REF: LISBON 3299

SUMMARY: IN FACE OF UNITED OPPOSITION OF LISBON'S ESTABLISHMENT PRESS, JUNTA HAS BACKED DOWN AND FORMALLY LIFTED ITS SUSPENSION ORDERS AGAINST THREE LISBON DAILIES. JUNTA FOLLOWED-UP THIS RETREAT WITH FRONTAL ASSAULT ON ONE OF PRESS LAW'S PRESUMED ORIGINAL TARGETS, MAOIST LUTA POPULAR, WHICH HAS BEEN SUSPENDED INDEFINATELY. POTENTIAL CRISIS FOR PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT ACCORDINGLY HAS BEEN SURMOUNTED. WHILE RIGHTS OF "FREE PRESS" SUCCESSFULLY ASSERTED, SUSPENSION ORDER AGAINST FAR LEFT JOURNAL CONSTITUTES SIGNIFICANT NARROWING OF BOUNDS WITHIN WHICH DISSENT AGAINST PREVAILING ORDER WILL BE TOLERATED. END SUMMARY.

1. SUSPENSION ORDERS AGAINST THREE OF LISBON'S FOUR AFTERNOON DAILIES (REFTEL) STIMULATED AN IMMEDIATE AND UNITED REACTION BY ALL ELEMENTS OF ESTABLISHMENT PRESS COMMUNITY. ALTHOUGH REMAINING AFTERNOON DAILY DIARIO POPULAR WENT TO PRESS AUGUST 2 (WITH EDITORIAL ALREADY WRITTEN CONDEMNING SUSPENSION ORDERS AGAINST SISTER PUBLICATIONS), A CROWD OF DEMONSTRATING JOURNALISTS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND OTHER NEWSPAPER EMPLOYEES MASSED IN FRONT OF NEWSPAPER'S OFFICES SUCCESSFULLY PREVENTED COPIES FROM BEING DISTRIBUTED. LISBON ACCORDINGLY SURVIVED AUGUST 2 WITHOUT APPEARANCE OF ANY OF FOUR AFTERNOON DAILIES.

2. IN EXPRESSION OF SOLIDARITY WITH SUSPENDED JOURNALS, WEEKLIES EXPRESSO AND SEMPRE FIXE DECIDED NOT TO PUBLISH AUGUST 3. (EXPRESSO DID PLAN, HOWEVER, TO COME

OUT INSTEAD ON AUGUST 5). STAFF OF MORNING DAILY SECULO DECIDED THAT THAT JOURNAL TOO WOULD NOT PUBLISH, WHILE STAFF OF OTHER MORNING DAILY (DIARIO DE NOTICIAS) WAS PREPARING TO ADOPT POSITION WHEN CRISIS ABRUPTLY RESOLVED.

3. BOWING TO PRESSURE, JUNTA REPRESENTATIVE MET WITH EDITORS OF SUSPENDED NEWSPAPERS EVENING OF AUGUST 2 AND REACHED AGREEMENT, MADE PUBLIC TOWARD MIDNIGHT, LIFTING SUSPENSION ORDERS. ALL LISBON DAILIES AND WEEKLY EXPRESSO (BUT NOT SEMPRE FIXE) APPEARED NORMALLY ON AUGUST 3. WHILE DETAILS OF THIS MEETING HAVE NOT BEEN PUBLISHED, RESTRAINED TREATMENT OF ENTIRE ISSUE BY NEWSPAPERS APPEARING ON 3RD AND 5TH SUGGESTS A DECISION, MUTUALLY ARRIVED AT, TO TREAT DISPUTE AS ONE AMONG "GENTLEMEN": JUNTA TO ACT WITH GREATER RESTRAINT IN FUTURE (SEE PARA 6 BELOW), DAILY PRESS TO REPORT ON SENSITIVE MATTERS WITH GREATER DISCRETION.

4. AUGUST 5 NEWSPAPERS CARRY TEXT OF TWO COMMUNIQUEES EMANATING FROM JUNTA OVER WEEKEND. FIRST DENOUNCES "SOME ELEMENTS, CONSTITUTED IN EXTREMIST POLITICAL MOVEMENTS OR ACTING INDIVIDUALLY", OF TRYING TO DISCREDIT THE ARMED FORCES AND UNDERMINE POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS. SUCH ELEMENTS, GUILTY OF "IDEOLOGICAL AGGRESSION AGAINST THE ARMED FORCES OR AGAINST THE PRINCIPLES PROCLAIMED BY THEIR MOVEMENT", ARE TO BE RIGOROUSLY PUNISHED. BOTH PUBLICATIONS AND PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS ARE SPECIFICALLY INCLUDED WITHIN AMBIT THIS COMMUNIQUE. SECOND, AIMING SPECIFICALLY AT LEFTIST-MAOIST MRPP WEEKLY LUTA POPULAR, ORDERED ITS INDEFINITE SUSPENSION.

5. ONE UNANSWERED QUESTION WHICH MAY BE CLEARED U LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WITHIN NEXT 24 HOURS CONCERNS ROLE AND COMPORTMENT OF AD HOC MEDIA COMMISSION. ALTHOUGH ALL MEMBERS OF COMMISSION RESIGNED AFTERNOON AUGUST 1, RESIGNATIONS REPORTEDLY WERE NOT ACCEPTED. JUNTA'S DECISION TO LIFT SUSPENSION ORDERS MAY PROVIDE BASIS FOR COMMISSION MEMBERS TO STAY IN OFFICE, THEREBY ENDING IMMEDIATE POLITICAL CRISIS OVER QUESTION OF PRESS FREEDOM.

6. COMMENT: CLOSING-OF-RANKS OF MEMBERS ESTABLISHMENT PRESS APPEARS TO HAVE CARRIED DAY FOR PRINCIPLE OF PRESS FREEDOM--FOR THOSE WHO ASSUMED THAT INTERIM PRESS LAW WAS WEAPON TO BE AIMED SOLELY AGAINST FAR LEFT, NEVER AGAINST THOSE WHO CONSIDERED THEMSELVES FAITHFUL SUPPORTERS OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ARMED FORCES

MOVEMENT. HOWEVER, UNLESS ESTABLISHMENT PRESS REACTS WITH SAME VIGOR TO EFFECTIVE CLOSING OF LUTA POPULAR, NET RESULT WILL BE A LOSS FOR PRINCIPLE OF FREE PRESS IN PORTUGAL. PRECEDENT BEING ESTABLISHED TODAY MAY WIND UP BEING APPLIED TO NON-EXTREMIST PRESS AT SOME FUTURE DATE, ESPECIALLY ONCE CURRENT BROAD COALITION SHATTERS. IN SIMILAR FASHION THE "GENTLEMEN'S AGREEMENT" (IF SUCH EXISTS) BETWEEN JUNTA AND PRESS, THE ONE TO INVOKE THE PRESS LAW MORE SPRINGLY AND THE OTHER TO LAY OFF POLITICALLY SENSITIVE SUBJECTS, MAY LEAD TO PRESS CENSORSHIP OF MOST INVIDIOUS KIND, THAT PRACTICED BY EDITORS AND JOURNALISTS AGAINST THEIR OWN.

7. A SECOND NOTEWORTHY FEATURE OF THIS CRISIS, INsofar AS FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN PORTUGAL CONCERNED, IS THAT JUNTA'S PARTIALLY IMPLEMENTED THREAT TO MOVE AGAINST EXTREMIST GROUPS WILL BE IMPLEMENTED FULLY. THUS FAR IT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE FOR THESE GROUPS TO BLOW OFF STEAM IN ESSENTIALLY HARMLESS PUBLIC MEETINGS AND BY PRINTING PUBLICATIONS OF LIMITED POPULAR APPEAL. JUNTA'S EXTREME SENSITIVITY TO SUBVERSIVE APPEAL OF GROUPS ATTEMPTING TO PROPAGANDIZE SOLDIERS IN THEIR BARRACKS MAY SOON LEAD TO OUTRIGHT BANNING OF MRPP AND OTHER FRINGE ORGANIZATIONS ON FAR LEFT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LAW, INFORMATION MEDIA, CENSORSHIP, INFORMATION CONTROL, NEWSPAPERS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 05 AUG 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LISBON03322
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740213-0348
From: LISBON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740874/aaaaculo.tel
Line Count: 193
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: LISBON 3299
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 19 MAR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <19 MAR 2002 by shawdg>; APPROVED <14 MAY 2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ESTABLISHMENT PRESS EMERGES VICTORIOUS, EXTREMIST JOURNAL PAYS THE PRICE.
TAGS: PINT, PO
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005